



## East Suffolk Business Ambition Fund Guidance

**IMPORTANT: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING GUIDANCE CAREFULLY BEFORE FILLING IN THE APPLICATION FORM.**

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## 1. UK Shared Prosperity Fund

This grant scheme is funded by the Government's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), which aims to help kickstart economic growth and promoting opportunities in all parts of the UK.

For a summary of the Fund please see [www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/uk-shared-prosperity-fund](http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/uk-shared-prosperity-fund)

## 2. Funding available

East Suffolk Council's Economic Strategy provides a clear vision of our economy, this being: we want to offer support and encouragement to businesses, so they develop, grow and invest locally in a way which creates opportunities for our residents.

East Suffolk's economy is dominated by micro and small enterprises, with 88.9% of all enterprises in the district being micro, and we want to enable more to be established and thrive. To achieve this, we want to enable the provision of appropriate workspace and premises for small businesses, to equip small business owners / managers with the skills they need and enable them to access all the support that is available to them. Many East Suffolk businesses have significant sustainable growth potential. East Suffolk Council wants to provide support to enable local businesses to reach their growth potential by allowing businesses to access a flexible investment fund that enables them to demonstrate the long-term impact of the investment.

To meet our local business's needs, we are offering a unique opportunity for small-to-medium sized businesses within the district to access capital and revenue funding to support investment projects that will enhance potential business growth.

To demonstrate how the grant will enhance potential business growth, you are expected within your application to show a clear overview of the expected outcomes from the funding, if successful, and how you will track this over the longer term, such as measuring:

- Revenue increase
- Profit increase
- Sales growth
- Increased market share on competitors
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Employee growth

The way you propose to measure the outcome of the grant and evidence this in later monitoring should be robust and have clear economic outcomes. I.e. you could explain that you expect the grant will help you increase your annual profit by X% and you will measure this using your accountancy software, comparing pre-grants net profits to post grants net-profits.

***This evidence should be used to demonstrate how it will meet one of the following outcomes as a minimum requirement and evidence how the grant will enhance business growth:***



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**Job creation as a result of the project in the form of new employees (part or full time)**

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**Jobs safeguarded through reduced business costs and improved efficiencies (part or full time)**

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**New or improved products or services to the market**

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**Expansion of existing products or services to engage in new markets**

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**New to the firm technologies – i.e. new equipment, technological requirements leading to improved business productivity**

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**Filling vacant units on East Suffolk high streets and enhancing existing high street businesses**

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**New enterprises created**

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Grant funding is available for both start-up and established businesses. Applicants to the fund must have a registered business address or a trading address within East Suffolk.

**To be eligible to apply, applicants must first complete the screening form – please follow this link: [https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/East Suffolk Business Ambition Fund screening](https://my.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/service/East_Suffolk_Business_Ambition_Fund_screening)**

**Grants of between £2,500 - £5,000 per application are available.**

**The maximum grant awarded will fund up to 75% of the total eligible project costs. This means that the minimum project cost we can support is £3,333.33.**

### **3. Types of projects supported**

Your application must demonstrate how the grant will support the long-term goals and objectives of your business and result in one or more of the economic outcomes, as previously listed.

Please note that you can apply for capital funding only.

Capital funding should be used for physical assets, such as equipment, machinery and those items that are a long-term asset to your business.

The fund is designed to be flexible, and applications will be assessed on the economic value and evidence of how well it meets the previously stated outcomes. A clear process of measuring the



stated outcomes is essential and you will need to later report progress against outcomes in your required monitoring.

**Applications to the scheme will need to:**

- **evidence the business need for the project**
- **detail what the funding will be used for and explain how the investment will deliver against the aims of the Fund**
- **provide measurable and quantifiable project outcomes that will lead to business growth**

**Applications will be automatically rejected if you do not provide the following information (unless we believe there has been mistake made):**

*Budget Breakdowns*

It is important that when an application is written that costs are **individual** and clearly broken down **for each product and service**. Without that level of clarity, it is uncertain as to how the grant is to be spent and can be difficult to monitor/evaluate throughout the project life cycle.

*Procurement Evidence*

The grant guidance details the procurement requirements and each threshold between the requirements. **Without clear evidence** and the indicated number of quotes, East Suffolk Council **cannot proceed** with the application. (We may allow grace periods before funding award for applicants to provide any missing information)

*Budget Threshold*

East Suffolk Council has indicated the thresholds relevant to this grant scheme. If the project application exceeds that project threshold, we **cannot award** the funding and/or **reserve the right to reduce the funding** to meet the threshold.

*Planning Application Evidence*

Should your project require planning permissions to proceed, the application must include **evidence of the awarded permission**, or if tenanted, you must provide appropriate landlord permissions.

*Project Start and End Dates*

The project must **not** have commenced before the panel has made its decision on the application. Planning permissions and project planning may occur prior, but no purchases or physical alterations are allowed until panel decision.

**4. Am I eligible?**

We can confirm this quickly, but if you are a UK registered enterprise and you are an SME then you are eligible to apply. This means you:



- Employ 250 people or fewer
- Do not exceed turnover of £36m
- Total assets do not exceed £18m

We will accept applications from sole traders and start-up businesses.

This funding will support businesses in any sector, except for primary agriculture (including processing and marketing of agricultural products).

We are unable to offer grant support if your business is ailing or insolvent, or you have received rescue funding which has not yet been repaid. Financial checks will be undertaken.

### 5. Is my proposal eligible?

Your investment project must be based in East Suffolk, and you must be able to implement your proposals as soon as you have been successful with your grant application (we are unable to accept any retrospective costs). We are looking for short term projects and they must be fully completed by 30 September 2026.

All required permissions, licences, such as a planning and landlord permission, for example, must be in place before submission of an application.

To find out more about how to gain planning permission, please visit:

East Suffolk: <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/>

You will be asked on the application form to declare any other permissions or licences that are required for your project and to confirm that they are in place before the project starts.

### 6. Is my project value for money?

To ensure we support value for money projects, you will need to provide evidence of your proposed project costs. You must use a third-party supplier and must not use a linked or connected business to provide the services or goods.

The evidence you need to provide with your application depends on the amount you plan to spend per contract or supplier. The following table outlines the minimum procedures you will need to follow.

(The minimum invoice spend we would support is £250 per individual supplier).

Value of purchase (excluding VAT)	Minimum procedure to be followed per contract or supplier
£250 - 2,499	At least one quotation



£2,500 - £74,999	Three written quotations or prices sought from relevant suppliers of goods, works and / or services
£75,000 and over	Applications over the total project cost of £75,000 will not be considered for this grant scheme.

## 7. What we cannot fund

- Property and / or land purchase
- Private property conversions for business use
- Vehicles (of any type)
- Core running costs or staff costs unless they are new posts and project specific
- The direct, like-for-like replacement of equipment, items and consumables including laptops and software
- Purchase of tablets, phones, laptops and computers will need to be robustly justified and why you require the certain level of specification requested
- Items that are not directly needed to deliver the proposed project
- Repeat applications, including from linked enterprises
- Working capital or stock items for selling
- Recruitment costs
- CRM platforms or equivalent
- VAT. Please do not include VAT in your project costs if you are VAT registered and are able to claim it back
- Projects unable to start within 6 months of the grant award date
- Projects that fail to be completed by 31 March 2026
- Activities promoting political or religious beliefs
- Payments towards endowment funds, deficit funding or loans
- Overseas travel for individuals/groups unless for participation in trade fairs.
- Sponsored or fundraising events
- Funding for trips abroad or hospitality to other organisations
- Repeat funding – i.e., if your local council, or other body has previously provided a grant for the same activity
- Items or projects which only benefit an individual
- Retrospective costs e.g. costs incurred prior to grant approval confirmation
- Projects that will displace existing provision
- Activities that are to meet statutory obligations



## 8. How will the applications be processed and assessed?

Applications received within the deadline will first be checked for eligibility. This includes checking that all sections of the application form have been completed in full, that all required supporting documents have been supplied and that the project for which funding is being sought matches the criteria of the Fund. As previously mentioned, your application will be automatically rejected, with notice to you, if you have not provided the minimum information mentioned above.

Applicants may be contacted to clarify information given in their application. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure that the information provided is easy to understand, answers the questions fully and clearly explains what the funding will be used for.

Following eligibility checks, applications will be assessed and scored by the officers from the Council and will then be moderated by a grants panel to reach a final decision. This final decision is at the discretion of the panel and subject to the funds left available so there is no guarantee that your project will be funded.

All applications are scored out of 20. The scoring assessment is as follows:

Assessment criteria	Score
Major Concerns – no response to the question or a response that is significantly deficient, fails to address the question/prompt	0
Minor Concerns – limited information provided, or a response that is inadequate or only partially addresses the question	1
Acceptable – an acceptable response submitted in terms of the level of detail, accuracy and relevance	2
Comprehensive – a comprehensive response submitted in terms of detail and relevance	3
Outstanding – a comprehensive and tailored response to a significantly better degree, delivering innovation and considerable and meaningful outcomes with evidence to support their statements	4

If your application achieves a total of less than 10 points across all five questions within the application form, then your application will also not be considered for funding by the panel, and you will be advised to have a 1-2-1 to discuss a potential reapplication, if appropriate.

This grant scheme is limited, **the fund will open for applications on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and will close for application at 11:59pm on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026**. You can submit a grant application until the following webpage states that the fund has been closed:

<https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/business/uk-shared-prosperity-fund/>

**A grant panel will take place within the second week of March 2026** to consider applications received.



If your application is successful, you will be notified of the decision through a Grant Acceptance (via email) within 5 working days of the Panel meeting. Until you have been notified of the approval and signed the Grant Acceptance form, you must not incur any costs on the project.

Funds through this grant scheme should only be spent on the items/purpose detailed in the approved application form and Grant Acceptance and by no later than 30 September 2026. All funding awarded must be spent by 30 September 2026, although our contribution could be part of a longer-term project which is match-funded from elsewhere. You must indicate on your form if you have applied for or intend to apply for match funding for this project. If the grant is not spent on the approved purposes or there is an underspend, the Council has the authority to reclaim part or all, of the grant.

If you are proposing to make any changes to your approved project, please inform us as soon as possible.

An evaluation and monitoring form will be sent for completion after the stated project completion date on your application form (which cannot be beyond 30 September 2026). Please keep copies of receipts and invoices related to the project / activity. Please ensure you also provide bank statements showing evidence of defrayal – we will ask to see these as part of our monitoring process as we spot check a proportion of successful applications.

### 9. Subsidy control

The UKSPF Grant support will be delivered through Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA).

The maximum support through MFA is £315,000 and this is a cumulative total of all support received over the current, and the last two complete financial years through MFA, EU *de minimis* and Small Amounts of Financial Assistance Allowance.

If you are offered support through MFA, you will need to make a declaration that, 1) you have not already exceeded the £315,000, and 2) with award of the requested support, you will not exceed the £315,000 threshold.

You will be required to make a declaration of the subsidies that your business has been awarded on the application form.

### 10. May I apply for another grant?

If you have already been successful with the East Suffolk Business Ambition Grant Scheme, funded by the UKSPF, priority will be given to new applicants; however, we may be able to support a new project via this scheme so please stay in touch with East Suffolk Council and the New Anglia Growth Hub. If you cannot re-apply, we might refer you to an alternative programme or business support organisation.